

REVEREND CHARLES A. RYAN

3700 OLD LEE HIGHWAY

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030

September 12, 1989

Dear Herb and Hellen,

What a pleasant surprise I got when your letter arrived yesterday. I was thrilled to hear from you. It made my week. I truly appreciate your good will.

So often, I think back to my days in Martinsville. I was so happy there. I loved every minute there. Could never understand why Bishop Russell felt he had to move me, except he said I was needed in the Shenandoah Valley. But, all my memories of there are so pleasant. I loved working with Doctor Horne and the other ministers. We had so many good times together.

Glad to hear about your family. When I was there you had just your youngest son and daughter at home, plus an older son who married while I was there. I remember you going with me to Leaksburg when I bought the beautiful greyish green carpet for the church. I loved that church. It was so simple, but so elegant.

As I sit here typing away there are so many memories that flood in on me. I think the parishioners there were exceptional. Practically everybody was willing to help in some capacity or other. The CCD program there was outstanding. Such beautiful memories to live with. My health shows little if any improvement. It was one year on Sept. 1st that I officially retired and came here. It is nice here, and I'm as happy as can be under the circumstances. Everyone says I look good, and I guess I really do, considering all the surgery I've been thru. But, I miss my work greatly. Being so involved for so long and then to have to give it all up. For four months I was not able to do anything. Then in January, I started working one day a week- afternoons

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with Mother Tersa's Sisters at their hospice in Washington, D.C. I love it, and it has helped me so very much. They have AIDS patients, and elderly, homeless, sickly people. It is hard work, but so rewarding. It's like the front porch of Heaven. We average a death a week. When they come there, most are bitter, hate God and the Church. But it changes fast, and most die friendly towards the Church, most actually join. Then since July, I've been helping on Sundays with Masses and preaching at a new parish being established in Fairfax County. I enjoy that, too. It is hard for me, but rewarding. I rest the other days. It gives me plenty of time for prayer, and this is nice too. So, all in all, it isn't a prescription I would have written for myself if I'd been the physician, but I'm still able to do something, and for this I shall always be grateful.

Father Munley told me that you are getting ready to celebrate the 40th anniversary soon, and that all the former pastors will be invited to return. I'd love to, if I'm physically up to it. I don't know when the celebration will be, but my heart will be there, even if I can't. But, I'm hoping and praying I will be able to come.

Thanks again for writing. You made an old man happy. Give my best to the Wallaces. They were so good to me. I pray for them each day. They were both so kind.

Be good to Myrtle. She was always so good to others.

Do you still have that beautiful breakfront in your dining room? That was such a beautiful piece of furniture. You could build a whole house around it.

Remember me to the old timers that were there when I was there. I still

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think so often of my lovely little apartment in the church building. It was like a doll house-all that nice dining room furniture in early American. Oh, what memories. I'd best close, or this will be a book. Sorry about my typing. I notice reading this over that I failed to double space in some areas. Chalk it up to age. I was 67 last month, I was 43 when I came to St. Joseph's in 1965. Where have the years gone?

Occasionally, I see Fr. Julius Cilinski. He's stationed about 20 miles from here in Middleburg. Fr. Munley I see often. He's in Fredericksburg. Once or twice I've seen Fr. Campi. He's in Harper's Ferry, West Va. So much for the old pastors-after Fr. Munley, I lost track of the younger men that were there except for Father Paul Maier. He's from Rochester, like myself-from a wonderful old German Catholic Family.

Best sign off for now. My very best to you and yours. Hope you are both well and enjoying life. Thanks for all you did to make my five years at Saint Joseph's so memorable.

Love and prayers,

Father Ryan